

Wednesday, May 24, 2000

Duxbury Clipper

## School Construction Plans Presented

continued from page one

2001 and be completed by August 2002.

"You have very ambitious schedule," selectman Andre Martecchini told Williams.

"We're going to do everything we can to try to meet it," responded School Superintendent Dr. Eileen Williams.

The multi-million proposal will be funded through a Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion, which will appear on a town-wide ballot. A debt exclusion is a temporary tax increase. If a majority of the voters approve the ballot question, then the town's levy limit — revenue raised from real estate and personal property taxes — is temporarily increased only for the amount voted. There would be an increase in taxes, although once the project is paid off, the increase would disappear. A Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion is an override but it is not a general override, which most people may think of when they hear about raising taxes over the Proposition 2 1/2 ceiling. A general override allows the town to permanently increase its levy limit by an amount voted.

The school department is hoping the state will provide 67 percent reimbursement of the project.

Williams justified the master facilities plan by saying three things drive the need for more space. They are an increased enrollment, the need to create smaller class size and the desire to maintain and expand

instructional programs. A consultant hired by the schools provided ten years worth of enrollment figures that show an increase in school aged children in Duxbury.

"Increased enrollment is something we've been watching for a while," said Williams. "Our schools are now at a somewhat crowded situation."

With more children, the number of children in each classroom will increase and the school department wants to limit class sizes to these maximum numbers: 20 in Kindergarten, 22 in grades 1-5 and 23 in grades 6-12. Currently, there are many classes at all grades that have over 25 children in them, said Williams.

The master plan will provide enough classroom space to meet the highest enrollment through 2010 projected by the consultant. It will also provide space for full day Kindergarten and address what Williams labels as "deficiencies" in the three schools. These include insufficient space for technology, music instruction, special education, physical therapy, performing arts, gym and professional development.

The approximate costs of each project are the following: the addition and renovations to the Alden school total \$12.2 million; the early childhood center at Chandler school and the existing building's renovation total \$1.7 million; and upgrades to the schools' wastewater treatment plant total \$1.6 million.

A 20,000 square foot con-

necting building between the Alden and middle schools that would contain music classrooms, professional development space and a performing arts center would cost approximately \$3.7 million. The proposed 1,000 seat auditorium would be used by the schools and community, said Williams, explaining that there is not currently enough auditorium space to seat all who want to attend school performances.

"We frequently have to turn community members away from performances because we really don't have the space," Williams said. "We have more than enough performances going on to be able to use the middle school and high school auditoriums and this."

At Chandler school, there is no performing arts space; children use the cafeteria. In Alden, they use the gym. DMS has a 377 seat auditorium and the one at DHS contains 512 seats. Williams said the new auditorium could also be used for town meeting and by various performance groups such as the Bay Players, Snug Harbor Community Chorus, Plymouth Philharmonic, South Shore Bay Band and the Fontaine Academy of Dance.